

## Birdwatching Holidays in Spain, Morocco & more...

### **BOLETAS Birdwatching centre**

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### **BIRD HIGHLIGHTS**

TOUR	DATES
Morocco	16th to 26th March 2010

**Party:** Rose Newsom ,Bill Newsom ,Rosemary Jackson, Dave Jackson ,Mike Lockyear ,Julie Lockyear ,Keith Powrie ,Don Green ,Peter Soper, Mike Snook.

Tour Leader: Josele J. Saiz

**Total Number of Species: 181** 

## Weather & Sites:

<b>Day 1 –</b> 16.03.10	Cloudy and rainy Marrakesh – Setti Fatma - Marrakesh
<b>Day 2 –</b> 17.03.10	Nice, sunny Marrakesh - Oukaimeden
<b>Day 3 –</b> 18.03.10	Nice and sunny and superb weather. Marrakesh – BRWP – Toufliath – Amerzgane – Ouarzazate Reservoir - Boumalne
<b>Day 4 –</b> 19.03.10	Nice and Sunny Tagdilt Track – Imitier – Dades River
<b>Day 5 –</b> 20.03.10	Nice , sunny and chilly Boumalne – Todra Gorge – Ghris Oued - Merzouga
<b>Day 6 –</b> 21.03.10	Nice , sunny and warm Mfis – Rissany - Merzouga
<b>Day 7 –</b> 22.03.10	Nice ,sunny but some wind Erg Chebi – Derkaoua oued – Merzouga oases
<b>Day 8 –</b> 23.03.10	Cloudy and windy Merzouga – Igli – Boumalne Dades – Ouarzazate Reservoir
<b>Day 9 –</b> 24.03.10	Cloudy windy but warm Ouarzazate Reservoir – Ait Benhadou – Tazhart – Aolouz - Agadir
<b>Day 10 –</b> 25.03.10	Cloudy and warm Souss Massa – Oued Souss - Agadir
<b>Day 11 –</b> 26.03.10	Sunny warm Tamri - Marrakesh

Money for conservation has gone to : Desert Sparrow Project in Merzouga

0	Species	Scientific Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1	Little Grebe	Tachybaptus ruficollis										X	
2	Great Crested Grebe	Podiceps cristatus			X					х			
3	Northern Gannet	Morus bassanus											X
4	Great Cormorant	Phalacrocorax carbo maroccanus			X					X	X	X	X
5	European Shag	Phalacrocorax aristotelis											х
6	Grey Heron	Ardea cinerea			X					X	X	X	X
7	Little Egret	Egretta garzetta								X	X	X	X
8	Cattle Egret	Bubulcus ibis	Х	X	X	X				X	X	X	<b></b>
9	Black Crowned Night Heron	Nycticorax nycticorax						5	1				
11	Little Bittern White Stork	Ixobrichus minutis Ciconia ciconia	· ·		· ·	- v				X	XX	X	
12	Glossy Ibis	Plegadis falcinellus	X	X	X	X				, x	XX	х 1	X
13		Geronticus eremita										,	30+
14		Platalea leucorodia									8	8	1
15		Phoenicopterus ruber										-	X
16		Tadorna ferruginea						1		х	Х		
17	Common Shelduck	Tadorna tadorna								X	X		
18	Mallard	Anas platyrhynchos									х		х
19	Gadwall	Anas strepera									1		
20	Northern Pintail	Anas acuta											3
21	Northern Shoveler	Anas clypeata										X	Х
22	Marbled Duck	Marmaronetta angustirostris								24		3	
23		Pandion haliaetus								2	1		
24	9	Circaetus gallicus		4	1						1	2	
25	Western Marsh Harrier	Circus aeruginosus harterti				X				4	2		
26	Montagu's Harrier	Circus pygargus									1		
27	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	Accipiter nisus punicus			X					X			
28		Buteo rufinus cirtensis		1	2	5+	1			1	2		-
29	Golden Eagle	Aquila chrysaetos Hieraaetus fasciatus				1					1		
30	Bonelli's Eagle Booted Eagle	Hieraeatus pennatus		1	9						- 1		
32	Eurasian Kestrel	Falco tinnunculus	х	X	X	х	х	х	х	х	Х	х	х
33	Lanner Falcon	Falco biarmicus erlangeri	*	^		^	1	1	1	^			^
34		Falco peregrinus minor					X	X					<b></b>
35		Alectoris barbara spatzi			2		4					3	2
36	Common Moorhen	Gallinula Chloropus			_		-					X	<del></del>
37	Common Quail	Coturnix coturnix										h	
38	Eurasian Coot	Fulica atra										х	
39	Eurasian Oystercatcher	Haematopus ostralegus										х	
40	Black-winged Stilt	Himantopus himantopus						x		х		х	
41	Pied Avocet	Recurvirostra avosetta										X	
42	Eurasian Thick-knee	Burhinus oedicnemus saharae				7					5	X	
43		Cursorius cursor				6							
44		Pluviales squatarola										X	
	Common Ring Plover	Charadrius hiaticula								1	X	X	
	Little Ringed Plover	Charadrius dubius							1	X	X		
47		Charadrius alexandrinus								X	X	X	
	Common Snipe	Gallinago gallinago									Х	X	
49		Numenius arquata										X	
50 51		Tringa totanus Tringa nebulosa								х	v	X	
	Bar-tailed Godwit	Limosa lapponica								_^	Х	X	
53		Limosa limosa										X	
54		Tringa ochropus						х	Х		Х	X	
55		Actitis hypoleucos Hypoleucos										X	
56		Calidris alba										X	
57		Calidris minuta									Х	X	
58		Calñidris tenmminckii									2	2	
59		Calidris alpina										X	
60		Larus audouinii											3
61		Larus cachinnans michahellis									X	X	х
62		Larus fuscus graellsi										X	X
63		Larus ridibundus								X	X		
64	Mediterranean Gull	Larus melanocephalus											Х
65		Sterna nilotica						<u> </u>			4	_	
66		Sterna caspia										3	
67 68	Sandwich Tern Spotted Sandgrouse	Sterna sandvicensis					85+					30	X
	Crowned Sandgrouse	Pterocles senegallus Pterocles coronatus				14	30+						
	Black-bellied Sandgrouse	Pterocles orientalis				14+	JUT				4		
71		Columba livia	х	х	х	X X	х	х	х	х	X	х	х
72		Columba oenas			X		-						
73		Columba palumbus	X	Х	X						1	Х	
10													4

74	Eurasian Turtle Dove	Streptopelia turtur										х	
75	Eurasian Collared Dove	Streptopelia decaocto	X	X	X	Х	X	X	X	X	Х	X	X
	Laughing Dove	Streptopelia senegalensis			X		2	2	8+	4	<del>6+</del>	X	X
77 78	Pharaoh Eagle Owl Little Owl	Bubo ascalaphus Athene noctua saharae				1						3	
79	Red-necked Nightjar	Caprimulgus ruficollis										3	h
80	Egyptian Nightjar	Caprimulgus aegyptius							1				
81	Alpine Swift	Tachymartis melba	х						-				
82	Common Swift	Apus apus								1	1		х
83	Pallid Swift	Apus pallidus	X	X	X					Х	X	Х	X
84	Little Swift	Apus affinis	X	X							X	X	X
85	Common Kingfisher								_			X	
86	Blue-cheecked Bee-eater	Merops persicus					13+		4	10+			
87	European Bee-eater	Merops apiaster			1	1	h		h	XX 1	Х 1	1	X
88 89	Eurasian Hoopoe Great Spotted Woodpecker	Upupa epops Dendrocopos major		2	3	-	"			X	7	h	
90	Levaillant's Woodpecker	Picus viridis vaillantii		4	J					^			
91	Bar-tailed Lark	Ammomanes cincturus arenicolor		•				х	X				
92	Desert Lark	Ammomanes deserti payni			6+		8+	1	X	X	X		
93	Greater Hoopoe Lark	Alaemon alaudipes				7+		7+	1	1			
94	Thick-billed Lark	Ramphocoris clotbey				2							
95	Greater Short-toed Lark	Calandrella cinerea rubiginosa				X	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX		
96	Crested Lark	Galerida cristata randonii						X		X	Х	X	X
0.7	Crested Lark	Galerida cristata riggenbachi			.,	E ·	,		X				
97 98	Thekla Lark Sky Lark	Galerida theklae aguirrei Alauda arvensis harterti			X	5+ X	4						
	Horned Lark	Eremophila alpestris		15+		^							
100		Eremophila a bilopha				XXX							
101		Riparia riparia			х						х		х
	Plain Martin	Riparia paludicola mauretanica										2	
103	Eurasian Crag Martin	Hirundo rupestris	X	X	X	X	X			X	X		
	Barn Swallow	Hirundo rustica	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	x	X	X
	Red-rumped Swallow	Hirundo daurica rufula	X		X		1			2	x		X
	House Martin	Delichon urbica	X		X					X	X		
107		Motacilla alba		X	X	X	X	X	.,	X	Х	X	
108	Moroccan wagtial Ashy-headed Wagtail	Motacilla alba subèrsonata  Motacilla flava cinereocapilla						х	X				
100	Spanish Yellow Wagtail	Motacilla flavalberiae						X		х	х		
109	Grey Wagtail	Motacilla cinerea	X	X	Х		X				X		
110	Meadow Pipit	Anthus pratensis									X		
111		Pycnonotus barbatus	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X
112		Regulus ignicapillus			2								
113 114	White-throated Dipper Eurasian Wren	Cinclus cinclus Troglodytes troglodytes	h	X	h								
115		Monticola solitarius	"	1	h 1		4						
	Eurasian Blackbird	Turdus merula mauretanica	х	X	X	Х	X		Х	Х	х	х	Х
	Mistle Thrush	Turdus viscivorus bonapartei		X									
	Zitting Cisticola	Cisticola juncidis									1	х	х
119	Streaked Scrub Warbler	Scotocerca inquieta saharae					1						
	Cetti's Warbler	Cettia cetti	X	h	h		h			h	h	3	
	Eurasian Reed Warbler	Acrocephalus scirpaceus										X	
	Sedge Warbler Isabeline Warbler	Acrocephalus schoenobaenus										X	
	Desert Olivaceous Warbler	Hippolais opaca Hippolais pallida reisieri						4		1	1	XX	
	Willow Warbler	Phylloscopus trochilus		X	х		х	X	Х	X	X	х	х
	Common Chiffchaff	Phylloscopus collybita		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Iberian Chiffchaff	Phylloscopus collybita brehmii									X	X	
	W Bonellis Warbler	Phylloscopus bonelii			1				1	3	10+		
	Blackcap	Sylvia atricapilla		X	h					X	Х	X	
	African Desert Warbler	Sylvia nana deserti							1				
	Greater Whitethroat	Sylvia communis								1	1	•	
	Western Orphean Warbler Subalpine Warbler	Sylvia hortensis hortensis			2	1	2	10+	VV	VV	1	2	
	Sardinian Warbler	Sylvia cantillans Sylvia melanocephala		X	X		X	707	XX	XX	X X	x	X
	Spectacled Warbler	Sylvia conspicillata		^	^	1	3	2	1	1	^	^	1
	Tristram's Warbler	Sylvia deserticola moroccana					4						
	European Robin	Erithacus rubecula		X									
138	Common Nightingale	Luscinia magarhynchos			h					1			
	Black Redstart	Phoenicurus ochruros			1	X	X				X		
	Comon Redstart	Phoenicurus phoenicurus			1	Х	X	Х	X		X	X	
	Moussier's Redstart	Phoenicurus moussieri		7	1							X	X
	Common Stonechat White-crowned Wheatear	Saxicola torquata  Oenanthe leucopyga augra			X		XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	Х	
	Black Wheatear	Oenanthe leucura		6	X		X	^^	^^	X	X		х
	Northern Wheatear	Oenanthe oenanthe			X	х	X			X	X		

146	Seebohm's Wheatear	Oenante seebohmi		1				1					
147	Magreb Wheatear	Oenanthe halophila					1						
	Red-rumped Wheatear	Oenanthe moesta				X	X			1			
	Black-eared Wheatear	Oenanthe hispanica				-	1	_	X	X	X	X	
150		Oenanthe deserti homochroa			2	8+	4	2	1	2	X		
	Fulvous Babbler	Turdoides fulvus moroccanus						7	5				
	Coal Tit	Periparus ater atlas		1	h								
153		Parus major excelsus	X	X	X					X	X	X	X
	African Blue Tit	Cyanistess ultramarinus	3	7+	X	X					X		
	Short-toed Treecreper	Certhia brachidactila mauretanica			h								
156	Southern Grey Shrike	Lanius meridionalis algeriensis	2	1	1	X	X			X	X	X	X
	Southern Grey Shrike	Lanius meridionalis elegans						3	2				
157	Woodchat Shrike	Lanius senator		х	х	х	х	Х	Х	х	Х	х	Х
158	Black-crowned Tchagra	Tchagra senegala cucullata										1	
	Eurasian Magpie	Pica pica mauretanica	х	х	х						х	X	X
	Red-billed Chough	Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax barbarus	X	70+	120								
	Yellow-billed Chough	Pyrrhocorax graculus		125	,								
	Brown-necked Raven	Corvus ruficollis		120			2	4	1	2			
163		Corvus runcoms  Corvus corax tingitanus						-					Х
	Spotless Starling	Sturnus unicolor	X	X	X		X			X	X	X	X
	House Sparrow	Passer domesticus tingitanus	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Spanish Sparrow	Passer hispanolensis						X	X				
167	Desert Sparrow	Passer simplex						2	2				
	Rock Sparrow	Petronia petronia barbara		20+		<u> </u>							
	Chaffinch	Fringilla coelebs africana	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	
170	Red Crosbill	Loxia curvirostra			x								
171		Carduelis chloris	h	х						Х	х	х	
	European Goldfinch	Carduelis carduelis		X	х	х	х			X	X	X	
173		Carduelis canduelis  Carduelis cannabina		X	X	X	X			X	^	^	
173		Serinus serinus									· ·	· ·	· ·
		Coccothraustes coccothraustes burryi		X	X	Х	X			X	Х	Х	X
	Hawfinch	-		8									
	Crimson-winged Finch	Rhodopechys sanguinea aliena		50+									
	Trumpeter Finch	Rhodopechys githaginea zedlitzi				10+	15+	30+	20+	1	X		
	Cirl Bunting	Emberiza cirlus	1	2								X	
179	Rock Bunting	Emberiza cia africana		2			2						
180	House Bunting	Emberiza striolata sahari	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X
181	Corn Bunting	Emberiza calandra									х	х	Х
i l													
	Other Sightings												
	Other Sightings												
	Reptiles												
	Reptiles Bibron's Agama												
	Reptiles Bibron's Agama Morrocan Rock Lizard												
	Reptiles Bibron's Agama Morrocan Rock Lizard Saharan Green Frog												
	Reptiles Bibron's Agama Morrocan Rock Lizard Saharan Green Frog Green Toad												
	Reptiles Bibron's Agama Morrocan Rock Lizard Saharan Green Frog Green Toad Mauritanian Toad												
	Reptiles Bibron's Agama Morrocan Rock Lizard Saharan Green Frog Green Toad Mauritanian Toad Spanish Terrapin												
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	Reptiles Bibron's Agama Morrocan Rock Lizard Saharan Green Frog Green Toad Mauritanian Toad Spanish Terrapin Med Spur-thinged Tortoise  Mammals Barbary Ground Squirrel Fat Sand Rat Red Fox  Butterflies	Dragonflies (by Keith & Ann Powery)											
	Reptiles Bibron's Agama Morrocan Rock Lizard Saharan Green Frog Green Toad Mauritanian Toad Spanish Terrapin Med Spur-thinged Tortoise  Mammals Barbary Ground Squirrel Fat Sand Rat Red Fox  Butterflies Brimstone	Long Skimmer											
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#### Bird of the tour

Rose Newsom - Levaillant Woodpecker
Bill Newsom - <b>Serin</b>
Rosemary Jackson - Cream-coloured Courser
Dave Jackson - Egyptian Nightjar
Mike Lockyear - Egyptian Nightjar
Julie Lockyear – <b>Desert Sparrow</b>
Ann Powrie – Crimson Winged Finch
Keith Powrie – Crimson Winged Finch
Don Green - Black-Crwned Tchagra
Peter Soper - Cream-coloured Courser
Mike Snook – Egyptian Nightjar
Josele J Saiz – <b>Desert Sparrow</b>

# Moroccan Specialities in 16-26 March 2011

#### What we saw

**Bald Ibis** – More than 50 flying in Tamri area and the nearby coast.

**Marbled Duck** – Despite this year the best site for the specie the Lake of Merzouga was dry, we were lucky to find a group of 20 birds at Ouarzazate Reservoir and 3 at Souss Massa.

**Long-legged Buzzard** – Common in the "hammada" plains and other parts of southern Morocco.

**Lanner Falcon** – Excellent views of one individual perched on a cliff near Rissani. One adult hunting Trumpeter Finches at a drinking pool. We saw the falcon hunting and eating one of the finches few yards from us.

**Barbary Partridge** – Unpredictable where to find this bird, we were lucky to find two at the BRWP ('Boletas' Raptor Watch Point) and four at Todra Gorge, for some time.

**Cream Coloured Courser** – During our drive through the Tagdilt Track, six individuals close to our vehicles with good chances for photography.

**Spotted Sandgrouse** - Near Rissani, more than 85 individuals and no more than 20 metres from the group - a unique experience.

**Crowned Sandgrouse** – Same place as above, a small group of more than 30 individuals and at Tagdilt Track where 14 flew over the group.

Laughing Dove - Common in the Sous-Massa area as well as in the Erg Chebi oases.

**Pharoah Eagle Owl** – Superb views in daylight of one bird perched near Tinerhir.

**Egyptian Nightjar** – Thanks to our nomad in Oued Dekaoua (now used by all companies) we enjoyed early superb morning views of an individual "looking like a stone", roosting on the ground.

Little Swift - Common in Marrakesh and Agadir.

**Blue-cheeked Bee Eater** – Several individuals near Ouarzarzate, as well as different groups before Erfoud.

**Levaillant's Woodpecker** – This quiet woodpecker can remain perched for long periods. We had close views of a pair for at least 10 minutes before another male came to dispute the female.

**Bar-tailed Lark** – Common bird in the sandy areas of southern Morocco, with several close encounters to study them.

**Desert Lark**- Common in the rocky areas south of the Atlas and quite confident. Several pairs displaying.

**Greater Hoopoe Lark** – One of the stars of the Moroccan avifauna. We had superb views of several pairs displaying; the male sings and jumps up in the air, diving down in "Kamikaze" fashion, but always surviving for another dive. A real natural attraction.

**Thick-billed Lark** – Due to the cold February and the lack of rain in winter this nomadic bird was rare this year. We took a long time before we had a pair quietly walking in front of our vehicles. They were almost too close to photograph.

**Horned Lark** – I´ve seen an significant decrease of this species in the Atlas. After a snowy day we visited the Okaimeden ski resort, where just a small part of the road was open for vehicles. Around 15 individuals were trying to find something to eat on the open road.

**Temminck's Lark** - Common in the "hammada stoney desert". Elegant walker through the artemisa vegetation, the small stones and between the numerous plastic bags of the dirty "Plastdilt" track.

**Plain Martin** – We had good views of the last individuals breeding in the Sous Massa National Park. The colony holding more than 80 pairs was destroyed two years ago by the locals in what seems to be a "political-religious" decision to keep birders out of the area.

**Common Bulbul** – The commonest Moroccan speciality, spread across almost all habitats, except the alpine meadows. Noisy singer early in the morning at Agadir.

**Streaked Scrub Warbler** – Extremely shy and restless bird who likes run and jump on a sandy terrain covered by spiny vegetation. At the Grhis Oued and after a long, long time and perseverance, all of the group had good views of an individual who seemed to play 'hide and seek' with us.

**Isabelline Warbler** – Recently split from Western Olivaceous Warbler. We had a good number of them singing and displaying in the Sous Massa National Park.

**Desert Olivaceus Warbler** – This recently described species is slightly paler than the Isabelline warbler. We found three individuals in an oasis near the dunes at Erg Chebi.

**African Desert Warbler** - At Oued Derkaoa we had a good view of an individual circling and singing around the party.

**Tristram's Warbler** – At Todra Gorge we found 5 individuals within 100 metres with really close views, we thought they were moving to their breeding areas.

**Moussier's Redstart** – This 'jewel' of Morocco is common from Oukaimeden, at 2,600 mts above sea level, across to the Sous Massa, near Agadir, at just a few metres above sea level. Many enjoyable stops to study this beautiful creature.

**White-crowned Wheatear** – The commonest wheatear in the dessert and stony desert areas of Morocco associated with urbanisation. Many chances to photograph this species well.

**Seebohm's Wheatear**- Recently split from the Northern Wheatear. We had an individual at Oukaimeden, surviving in just a small patch of land, free from snow, and sheltered by a wall.

**Magreb Wheatear-** Formally part of the Mourning Wheatear species. Before Tinerhir, we found an individual interacting with a Desert Wheatear.

**Red-rumped Wheatear** – Very common along the Tagdilt Track and hammada desert from Ouarzarzate to Tinerhir. We recorded countless individuals on our visits to the proper habitats.

**Desert Wheatear-** Beautiful wheatear although not numerous is well spread in the dessert areas. Several pairs in the Tagdilt Track, Ouarzazate Plains and Oued Derkaoua.

**Fulvous Babbler**. Shy bird and gregarious, you always see more than one bird. We had two groups in different oases near Erg Chebi first of 6 and the second of 5 difficult to scope them for a long time but we all had scope views.

African Blue Tit - Common in the Atlas and the river beds to the south of the High Atlas.

**Black-crowned Tchagra** – Scarce and localised along the Atlantic coast and the Sous Valley influence. One individual came to visit the group, stopping literally 1 metre away. We could not believe our eyes.

**Brown-necked Raven** – Confined to the desert, we had excellent views of several individuals, in the early morning and late in the day. We could appreciate that the "chocolate brown" colour is spread throughout the body, apart from the wings and not confined only to the neck.

**Desert Sparrow -** Very scarce in recent years . Boletas, with other associations, is promoting a project to help this species in Merzouga. The project has started testing the viability of nest boxes. We had a lovely pair in one of the local "auberges" trying to build a nest in a metallic pipe, a memorable moment for the party.

**Trompeter Finch** – Nomadic bird well spread in south Morocco good numbers of birds drinking in the oases and feeding in the oueds.

**Crimson-winged Finch** – A bunch of 50 individuals tying to find food along a few metres of 'snow free' road.

**House Bunting** – First and last speciality to see when you arrive/leave Morocco as is always in the Marrakesh airport. Very common in most habitats.

#### What we missed

**Barbary Falcon** – I could not find this species in the places I've been visiting for the last 5 years. One individual perched near Rissani, was mentioned as a Barbary Falcon by other groups. After a much study we found it had the loral features of *Falco peregrinus*, not of *Falco peregrinoides*, so we noted it as a Peregrine.

**Houbara Bustard** – Since our first year visiting Morocco, in 2003, we have spread the importance for birdwatchers to the local nomads and drivers. We are now sure that the wild specimens had disappeared in the area by the beginning of the 1990's.

The individuals you can see today in Merzouga in February/March are those realised from captivity in December to be hunted with falcons by the Arabian Kingdom's falconers. These Houbara Bustards never survive until the summer, being predated by foxes and other predators. If any of them try to breed, the net of local wardens working for the Arabians are paid 20€ for each Houbara Bustard egg. Although we will devote some time to searching for the Houbaras, just in case, We recommend you do not 'tick' it as a proper species.





Pictures by Josele J Saiz

















